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MOSCOW PROPOSES TO END A DISPUTE ON SIBERIA RADAR

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WASHINGTON, Oct. 28 — The Soviet Union has offered to halt construction on a radar in central Siberia in return for the United States' forgoing plans to modernize radars in Britain and Greenland, according to American and Soviet officials.

The United States contends that the Soviet radar, at Abalakovo near Krasnoyarsk, is an early warning radar and violates the Antiballistic Missile Treaty of 1972. The Russians say the radar is for space tracking and is allowable under the treaty.

Some British and American intelligence experts, while not agreeing with the Soviet Union, have said that they are not convinced about the United States position.

Deal Called Unacceptable

Some American officials interpret the Soviet proposal, made about three weeks ago, as a move toward acknowledging that the Abalakovo radar is a violation of the 1972 treaty.

At the same time, these officials said, it is unacceptable to equate the Abalakovo radar with the upgrading of the radars at Fylingdales in Yorkshire and at Thule in Greenland, which they say is allowable.

"We have neither a positive nor a negative attitude overall to the Soviet proposal," a State Department official said. "By offering the trade, they admit they might be in violation, but there is no decision as of now on how to respond except to probe informally."

A Pentagon official said, "It is a non-offer, a sucker deal."

Proposal Made in Geneva

As described by American and Soviet officials, the offer was made at a special meeting in the Geneva arms negotiations by Yuli A. Kvitsinsky, who heads the space-weapons team. Two other parallel arms discussions in Geneva are concerned with medium-range nuclear weapons and strategic, or long-range, weapons.

According to the sources, Mr. Kvitsinsky said that if the Abalakovo radar was inconsistent with the ABM treaty, so were American plans to upgrade Fylingdales and Thule.

American officials here say that the Fylingdales and Thule radars were in existence at the time the ABM treaty went into force and were exempted.

The Soviet response is that the exemption applied to the Thule and Fylingdales radars as they were in 1972 and was not intended to permit upgrading. Some British officials are also said to feel that the reconstruction at Fylingdales is a violation.

The ABM treaty allows the deployment of large radars only on the periphery of the national territories as

early warning devices, with their antennas facing out. The object is to prohibit radars in the interior that could be used to track incoming warheads and guide missiles to destroy them.

Since the large radar being built in central Siberia is in the interior, the United States contends that it violates the treaty and should be dismantled. The Soviet Union counters that the treaty permits space-tracking radars anywhere, that the Abalakovo radar is solely for that purpose, and that, in any event, its antennas are not angled low enough to track incoming missiles.

The United States says the radar has the potential to become the hub of a land-based missile defense system if the Soviet Union decided to break the ABM treaty. The United States' own space-based missile defense program ultimately envisions a land-based defense system that could destroy missiles on takeoff, in space and during re-entry.

A Pentagon spokesman said today that the modernization of the Thule radar would be completed in the next year or two, and that upgrading of the Fylingdales radar had not yet begun.

The United States uses Thule under a 1951 accord with Denmark, which is responsible for Greenland's defense. The accord grants the United States naval and air bases in Greenland as part of the Atlantic alliance.

Two American officials said the Fylingdales reconstruction was being held up because of British concerns that it might be a treaty violation. A Pentagon official contended that the delay was a British ploy to gain a greater share of construction contracts.

Experts in the British Defense and Foreign Ministries are also known to question the American judgment that the Siberian radar is a treaty violation.

The radars at Thule, Fylingdales and Clear Air Force Station in Alaska are the mainstays of the United States' early warning system against missiles.

The planned upgrading of the Fylingdales radar, according to Pentagon officials, would double the scope of the radar to 360 degrees and increase its range by one-third, to 6,300 miles. The present installation is directed in a semicircle covering Scandinavia, Greenland and a relatively small northwest part of the Soviet Union. It would be replaced by a radar sweeping

full circle around the western Soviet Union, the Middle East, North Africa and into the North Atlantic.

Unlike the 360 degree coverage at Fylingdales, the Thule radar would have a coverage of 240 degrees.

The Soviet position is said to be that only large so-called phased-array radars on the periphery of national territories may be modernized, and that the Thule and Fylingdales radars were permitted in 1972 because they were not phased-array radars.

American officials say they reject any limitation on the upgrading of these radars because none was stipulated at the time of the treaty. They also said that, legal issues aside, the Soviet offer was unfair because the Siberian radar was "essentially completed," compared to the proposed Thule

and Fylingdales upgrading. By "essentially completed," the officials said, they mean the exterior of the radar. They said they could not be sure about the interior work.

Soviet officials said the Abalakovo radar was 40 percent completed.